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Soil Conservation Service

Program Aid Number 1370

# 'Tropic Lalo' paspalum

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## 'Tropic Lalo' paspalum

'Tropic Lalo' paspalum (*Paspalum hieronymii* Hack.) is recommended for use as ground cover in orchards, waterways, roadsides, and other erosion-prone areas. It will trap large amounts of sediment if grown in waterways. This low-maintenance cultivar requires only infrequent mowing and has such dense growth that it crowds out weeds. When mowed weekly or biweekly, it becomes matlike and makes a coarse but very acceptable turf for lawns or pathways. Its tough, coarse stolons will tolerate moderately heavy use from vehicular equipment and foot traffic.

Tropic Lalo was released in 1984 by the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, in cooperation with the University of Hawaii, Hawaii Institute of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, Department of Agronomy and Soil Science.

### Description

Tropic Lalo is a low-growing, rapidly spreading, stoloniferous grass that usually attains a height of about 12 inches; however, it may reach a height of 24 inches under

moist, fertile conditions. Its many stolons readily root at the nodes to form a dense, sodlike turf. The abundant leaves are linear, approximately 3 to 9 inches long and 1/2 inch wide. Coarse hairs about 1/16 to 1/8 inch long cover the leaves and stems. The flowering stems are semierect and 12 to 24 inches high, depending upon soil fertility. Seed production is sparse; about 1 to 2 percent of viable seed are produced.

### Adaptation

Tropic Lalo is well adapted to subtropical areas that have an annual rainfall of 40 to 100 inches. Areas of adaptation include Guam, Puerto Rico, the Hawaiian islands below an elevation of 3,000 feet, and the subtropical part of southern Florida. If irrigated, Tropic Lalo will grow well in drier areas. Its adaptation to the continental United States is not well known, but it may be adapted to other coastal areas in the South and Southwest.

Tropic Lalo is adapted to a wide range of soil conditions, from coarse to fine textures and from strongly acid



Tropic Lalo is being used in a grassed waterway that also serves as a field road on this small farm on the island of Hawaii. Dryland taro borders this dual-purpose waterway.

to slightly alkaline reactions (pH 4.5 to 7.5). It is somewhat tolerant of infertile soils and of low-lying soils that tend to stay wet but not waterlogged. It does not tolerate long, dry periods, but is quite resistant to water erosion and tolerates 50 to 60 percent shade. Under shaded conditions, however, growth is slower and a less dense mat forms.

## Establishment

Tropic Lalo is established from sprigs (stem cuttings) planted on grids that range from 12 by 12 inches up to 36 by 36 inches. Sprigs may be broadcast and lightly covered with a disk or planted in furrows that are 1 to 3 or more feet apart. The minimum planting rate should be no less than 40 bushels of sprigs or stolons per acre. Higher rates may be required in closer spacings.

In plantings of 12 by 12 inches, complete cover may be achieved in as little as 6 weeks. The areas to be planted must be moist or irrigated, as the sprigs and newly established plants are susceptible to drought.



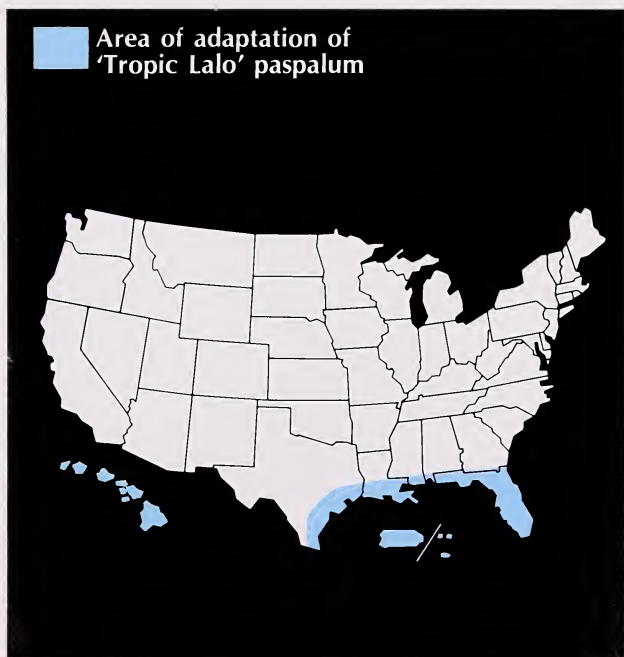
Tropic Lalo is used as ground cover in a young papaya orchard in the Kona district on the island of Hawaii. The grass is not mowed or irrigated in this location. The annual rainfall is about 45 to 50 inches.

Seedbed preparation may be minimal, using herbicides or disking, or both, to control weeds; however, a well-prepared seedbed is preferred. Weeds, which may be a problem until the grass is established, may be controlled by frequent mowing.

## Management

Tropic Lalo is excellent for use as ground cover. It will need only infrequent mowing unless a closely cut turf is required, such as for a lawn or ground cover in macadamia nut orchards. Mowing may be necessary 6 to 30 times a year, depending upon use and location. The cutting height may be less than 1 inch, as recovery is good.

This cultivar will respond to fertilizer nitrogen at rates of up to 200 lb/acre/yr of urea. Once established, however, fertilizer applications may not be necessary. In orchards, the fertilizer used for the trees should provide sufficient nutrients. Tropic Lalo may be grown in association with, and obtain its nitrogen from, legumes such as white clover (*Trifolium repens*), big trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), or the desmodiums (*Desmodium* spp.).







Tropic Lalo has been compared to hilograss (*Paspalum conjugatum*), 'Pensacola' bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum*), seashore paspalum (*Paspalum vaginatum*), and kikuyugrass (*Pennisetum clandestinum*). It is slower growing and requires less maintenance than kikuyugrass. It is faster spreading than bahiagrass and does not grow as tall. It provides better cover than hilograss and is adapted to a wider range of environments than seashore paspalum, which is primarily used around brackish water.

Tropic Lalo can be damaged by the grass webworm *Herpetogramma licarsialis* (Walker). No reports have been made of significant damage caused by plant pathogens in Hawaii.

## Availability

For more information on where to obtain Tropic Lalo and how to use and plant it, contact your local Soil Conservation Service office. It is listed in the telephone directory under U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. Assistance is available without regard to race, creed, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin.

